

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 813

By Beavers

A RESOLUTION to recognize and commend Williamson Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church on the occasion of its Consecration Service for the new sanctuary.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should recognize those venerable religious institutions and their congregations who, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, the good people of Williamson Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church comprise one such estimable congregation; on May 21, 2006, the members of the Williamson Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church will gather for the dedication of their new sanctuary in reflection and remembrance of how far this congregation's physical body has developed in one hundred and fifty years; and

WHEREAS, the oldest African-American church in West Wilson County, the Williamson Chapel congregation was organized around 1850; and

WHEREAS, the Mastman family, owners of a plantation on which the church would later stand, gave an acre of the land to a group of slaves for the purpose of establishing a church; Richard Williamson, a black preacher, was directed to build a log cabin for a church building, and he assumed the responsibility of forming the church; and

WHEREAS, a slave congregation worshipped at the log church on Sundays, with the children of the congregation meeting at the building during the week to pursue their education; the congregation was named Williamson Chapel in honor of its founder, Richard C. Williamson; and

WHEREAS, the church continued to meet and thrive as a free church after the end of the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, in 1876, Richard and Chaney Williamson transferred the property to the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church; the deed records the congregation's trustees as Cal Gordon, husband of Lizzie Williamson, the daughter of Richard and Chaney Williamson; Joe Johnson; Hiram Williamson, brother of Richard Williamson; Jessie Parker; and John Horton; and

WHEREAS, since the time of its organization, Williamson Chapel C.M.E. Church has experienced numerous changes, not only in the lives and hearts of the lay people and the pastorate, but also in the church's structure itself; and

WHEREAS, the original log church was torn down in 1896, and a new frame oblong building was built a few feet from the old log cabin; the building stood on stilts and had no electricity, so kerosene lamps were used for light, and two potbelly stoves were used for heat; some time in the late 1920s or early 1930s, a church bell was added to the tower; and

WHEREAS, during the years following Reverend John H. Britton's assignment to Williamson Chapel in 1936, the modest frame church was renovated with rock veneer, and an archway was added to the front of the church; in the 1950s, electricity and a coal furnace were installed; and in the 1960s, a choir room and pastor's study were added to the rock structure; and

WHEREAS, in July of 1998, Reverend Woodrow Harris, Jr., was appointed pastor to Williamson Chapel, and under his administration, the church family realized the implementation of the expansion plans that were developed under the leadership of Reverend Frederick L. Braddock; with additional land donated by the Jimmie Tibbs family and land purchased from the Andrew Martin family, a groundbreaking ceremony for the new sanctuary was held on April 17, 2005; members, family, and friends observed and participated in this great event; and

WHEREAS, Brother Jackie Jenkins chaired the building committee, which consisted of the late Tommy L. Caruthers, Robert Randle, Effie Hayes, Robert Williamson, Yvonne Jackson, James B. Polite, Ellen Turner, Michael Dobson, and secretary Pamela Dobson; and

WHEREAS, the Williamson Chapel Church moved into its new sanctuary on December 28, 2005; the former sanctuary will become the expanded multi-purpose facility; and

WHEREAS, for over a century and a half, the good people of Williamson Chapel have made prominent contributions to the civic, educational, and social fabric of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, for their exemplary service to their community and to the good people of Tennessee, the members of this exceptional congregation should be appropriately honored; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby recognize and commend Williamson Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church on the occasion of its Consecration Service for its new sanctuary, thank the good people of this historic congregation for their notable service to the State of Tennessee, and wish them much continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.